



**Michael Horowitz**

A Tutorial For Gypsy  
Jazz Style Plectrum  
Guitar Technique

# Gypsy Picking



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*To my family,  
Lee, Marcia, and Nina.*

## **Gypsy Picking**

A tutorial for Gypsy Jazz style plectrum guitar technique by Michael S. Horowitz

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# Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Introduction</i>	vii
<b>Part One: Gypsy Jazz</b>	<b>1</b>
About Gypsy Picking	1
Django Reinhardt and the Gypsy Guitar Technique	2
<b>Part Two: Fundamentals</b>	<b>5</b>
Changing Your Technique	5
Practice Guidelines	8
Body Position	9
Plectrums	11
Hand Position	13
<b>Part Three: Basic Techniques and Picking Patterns</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Part Four: Musical Examples</b>	<b>33</b>
Minor Blues solo	55
 <i>Afterword</i>	 59
<i>Suggested Listening</i>	60
<i>Notation Legend</i>	62
<i>Musical Examples Index</i>	63
<i>Forthcoming Releases</i>	64

## **About the Author**

Michael S. Horowitz holds a B.A. from the Berklee College of Music, Boston; an M.A. in ethnomusicology from the University of Washington, Seattle; and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Washington. In addition to academic pursuits, Michael has maintained an active performing schedule as both a band leader and a side man for numerous ensembles such as Hot Club Sandwich, Pearl Django, Zazou, and the David Hebert Group. Michael is also a sought after DADGAD-style guitarist and has accompanied numerous Irish musicians such as Randal Bays and Skip Healy. He is the leader of the Seattle based klezmer rock band Heavy Shtetl.

## **About DjangoBooks.Com**

DjangoBooks.Com is a publishing company entirely devoted to the study of the Gypsy guitar virtuoso Django Reinhardt. My aim is to provide the most accurate and effective learning aids so you can learn to play in the style of Django Reinhardt at an advanced level as quickly as possible. I strive for the utmost in authenticity, therefore my products are based on meticulous transcriptions of Django's recordings as well as fieldwork conducted among the contemporary European Gypsy masters of this style. Each book represents hundreds of hours of research, which has been organized and condensed to give you the "real thing" in an easy-to-learn format. I hope that I can save you lots of time and frustration in your own journey through the musical world of Django Reinhardt. See the "Forthcoming Releases" section of this book for upcoming releases, or visit my website: [www.DjangoBooks.Com](http://www.DjangoBooks.Com).

# Preface

**D**jango Reinhardt (1910-1953), the famous Gypsy guitarist, has influenced musicians far and wide. Musicians as diverse as the legendary singer/songwriter/guitarist Kenny Rogers, blues guitarist B.B. King, tenor saxophonist James Carter, bluegrass mandolinist David Grisman, and clarinetist/filmmaker Woody Allen have been inspired by Django's brilliant recordings from the first half of the twentieth century. These musicians and many more have been part of a revival of Django's music which has been underway now for at least a decade. Interest in buying, listening to, and playing Django's music may have equalled, if not surpassed, the level enjoyed during Django's lifetime. For those who love Django's music, it is an exciting time in which appreciation of this music seems to be growing without boundaries. It is my hope that this book will help to perpetuate the already considerable momentum of this revival.

My own interest in Django began over ten years ago when a bluegrass fiddler friend of mine played me a recording of Django and the Hot Club of France's *Daphne*. I was astounded by the brilliance of Django's improvisations, his full tone, and impeccable technique. I've been playing Django's music since.

My passion for Django's music led to my doctoral research in 2001 and 2002 among the Sinti Gypsies in The Netherlands. The Sinti, who have produced some of the world's best jazz guitarists, have preserved the string jazz style which was played by Django over fifty years ago. While travelling to many Gypsy camps and taking lessons from their guitar masters, I was quite surprised to learn that the technique employed in Gypsy jazz, unlike that of conventional jazz guitar, is quite systematic and uniform. Contrary to common belief that Gypsy guitar technique is spontaneous and sensual, I found that every Sinti guitarist I encountered used the same basic technique with little or no idiosyncrasies. It didn't take me long to realize that the best way to go about learning to



play this music was to learn the technique employed by these skilled guitarists. I set about doing this with single-minded dedication. After much study and practice, I felt I had grasped enough of the fundamentals of the Gypsy technique to perform in public. It occurred to me that this experience could help others who, for the reasons recounted in the next paragraph, may never be exposed to proper technique for Gypsy jazz guitar. Thus, I've decided to write this instructional book. It contains the results of hundreds of hours of study with Sinti guitarists, transcriptions of Django Reinhardt's solos, and the experience of playing Gypsy jazz professionally.

It's no secret that technique building is hard work. It takes the mechanical adeptness of an engineer; the coordination of a professional athlete; and a lot of patience, perseverance, and determination. Unfortunately, jazz guitarists don't have the standardized technique and solid body of instructional literature that has long been available to classical guitar students. This dearth of educational material has forced jazz guitar students to spend a great deal of time whittling away technical possibilities through trial and error rather than making music. Although the lack of standardized technique does open the door for more creative approaches—for example, Wes Montgomery's thumb technique or Kevin Eubanks' fingerpicking technique—for many it is a barrier that will never be breached without proper guidance. It is my hope that this book will help fill the vacuum of jazz guitar technique literature and subsequently speed the progress of those who study it.

With that said, I don't propose that the technique described in this book is the one and only way to play jazz guitar. It is a technique that has a long history of success by players of a variety of plectrum instruments, most notably among the Sinti jazz guitarists of Western Europe. For some, the limitations of this technique will present too great a barrier to their musical goals and subsequently have to be modified or abandoned all together. However, I believe that for most guitarists, especially those who specialize in acoustic playing, this technique offers the ideal combination of tone, volume, and speed and is therefore worth the time and effort required to achieve it.

Finally, it should be noted that this book would not have been possible without the generosity of the Fulbright Commission and the Netherland-America Foundation who provided funding for my research. The warm hospitality of the Dutch Gypsy jazz community made my stay in The Netherlands a pleasant and memorable one. Jan Brouwer, Leo Eimers, John Friedrichs, Mary Honcoop, Jan de Jong, Peter de Jong, Jaqui van Diessen-Bijveld, Georg Lankaster, Hans Meleen, Kevin Nolan, Harry Ter Haak, and Lala Weiss always made sure I was always on the right train and had a bed to sleep in. I extend my deepest gratitude to my teachers, both Sinti (Fapy Lafertin, Jan Limberger, Martin Limberger, and Paulus Schafer) and non-Sinti (Robin Nolan and Reinier Voet), for their guidance and inspiration.



# Introduction

**T**his book will be beneficial for guitarists at any skill level. The basic techniques and picking patterns explained here will help beginning students develop a solid foundation on which to build their technique. More advanced students, many of whom have never been exposed to Gypsy technique, will find the picking techniques and Gypsy musical phrases in this book a welcome addition to their improvisational vocabulary. Additionally, this picking technique can be applied to many styles of plectrum guitar playing other than Gypsy jazz. Rock, bebop, bluegrass, and blues guitarists can all improve their technique and musical vocabulary through the material described here.

One of the unique features of this book is the meticulous attention given to right-hand pick strokes and left-hand fingerings. The picking patterns and fingerings notated here are based on research among Gypsy musicians and the study of video footage of Django Reinhardt. This book is unlike many other Gypsy jazz guitar instructional books in which the fingering and picking suggestions are unidiomatic to the Gypsy jazz genre or, at worst, merely an afterthought full of errors. To spare you this frustration, my examples are proven ways of executing Gypsy musical phrases.

*Gypsy Picking* has a three-fold purpose. The first is to provide the students with a solid foundation on which they can build their right-hand picking technique. This is achieved by distilling the complex motions of the right hand into fifteen picking patterns that allow the student to isolate and master problematic motions. Through the study of these fifteen picking patterns the student will train his or her hand to perform the basic movements required to play Gypsy jazz music (and many other genres as well).

The second purpose is to assist the student in developing an improvisational vocabulary of musical phrases commonly used by Django Reinhardt and contemporary Gypsy jazz musicians. The “Musical Examples” section contains thirty examples transcribed direct-



ly from the playing of Django and other Gypsy musicians. Learning these examples will allow the student to improvise within the stylistic conventions of the Gypsy jazz genre. For additional pedagogical value the musical examples are cross-referenced with the appropriate picking pattern.

The third purpose is to provide the student with some extra-musical information about the context and history of Django Reinhardt and Gypsy jazz music. Although Gypsy jazz has never been exclusively a "Gypsy" music, its development and aesthetics have always had a special relationship to the Gypsy community who have consistently produced the genre's best players. This book will not only help the student learn to play Gypsy jazz music, but also to garner an understanding of the culture which produced it.

In this book you will learn:

- ◆ Proper body and hand positions
- ◆ The rest-stroke picking technique
- ◆ Fifteen picking patterns
- ◆ Thirty of the most commonly used phrases
- ◆ A minor blues solo packed with Django's favorite ideas
- ◆ History of Django Reinhardt and other Gypsy guitarists

The book is organized into four sections;

- ◆ Part I, "Gypsy Jazz," provides historical information about Gypsy jazz and the rest-stroke picking technique employed by Gypsy guitarists.
- ◆ Part II, "Fundamentals," explains proper body positions and practice guidelines that will help you progress more rapidly.
- ◆ Part III, "Picking Patterns," provides detailed explanations of the basic techniques required to execute rest-strokes. It includes fifteen picking patterns that are the cornerstone of Gypsy jazz style playing.
- ◆ Part IV, "Musical Examples," contains thirty examples transcribed directly from the playing of Gypsy jazz guitarists. These examples are organized by their corresponding Picking Pattern from Part III. To help put some of these examples in context, a five-chorus long minor blues solo is provided for additional study.

The accompanying CD has audio examples of the fifteen picking patterns, thirty musical examples, and the minor blues solo.

# Part One

## Gypsy Jazz

The musical legacy of Django Reinhardt has been preserved in the genre known today as “Gypsy jazz.” Curiously, Django’s music had little Gypsy identification during his lifetime. His identity as a jazz musician and a Frenchman seemed to eclipse much of the Gypsy association attached to his music. However, after Django’s death his music was most passionately preserved within the Gypsy community, a fact which subsequently gave rise to the label “Gypsy jazz.” Although there are many permutations and sub-styles of contemporary Gypsy jazz, most of them place an emphasis on Django’s pre-War style, instrumentation, and repertoire. The following are common characteristics of Gypsy jazz music:

- 1) Use of the acoustic guitar. More specifically, the “D hole” or “oval hole” guitars produced by the Selmer corporation of Paris during the first half of the Twentieth Century.
- 2) An ensemble comprised entirely of acoustic string instruments. The instrumentation used by Django’s group the Hot Club of France (two rhythm guitars, one solo guitar, a double-bass, and a violin) is considered the “classic” lineup.

- 3) An accompaniment style which uses an idiomatic swing rhythm referred to as *la pompe*. The *la pompe* rhythm's heavy accent on beats 2 and 4 differentiates it from American-style swing accompaniment, which tends to give a more even emphasis across all four beats.
- 4) A repertoire that consists of pre-war American swing standards; Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli compositions; compositions by later Gypsy guitarists such as Stochelo Rosenberg, Dorado Schmidt, and Lulu Reinhardt; French musette waltzes; Hungarian czardas; and Russian folk songs.

## Django Reinhardt and the Gipsy Guitar Technique

There are few guitarists who aren't amazed by the dazzling virtuosity of Django Reinhardt: the brilliance of his improvisations, the timelessness of his compositions, and his technical mastery. While few of us will ever play a solo as stunning as the one Django did in his version of *Dark Eyes* (1947) or write a composition as timeless as *Nuages*, Django's technique is attainable by nearly anyone willing to put in the hard work.

You may ask, "How can we know how Django played? He's been dead for nearly fifty years, and there's very little film footage of him." It's true no one can ever say for certain exactly how Django executed every passage in his music, but fortunately his legacy has lived on among the Sinti Gypsies of Western Europe. The research I conducted in The Netherlands revealed that during Django's lifetime, there had been (and still is) substantial contact between Sinti Gypsies in The Netherlands and Sinti Gypsies in France. For example, Herni Piotto, the now deceased patriarch of the Limberger family of musicians from Rijswijk, The Netherlands, was Django's contemporary and actually played with him on occasion. Transnational family connections, pan-Sinti religious and musical gatherings, and an itinerant lifestyle facilitated the transmission and preservation of guitar techniques used by Django to Sinti musicians across Western Europe. Subsequently, one would be hard pressed to find a Sinti guitarist who didn't use a variation of Django's technique.

Django's *powerful right hand*. This book focuses on one of the most fundamental elements of Django's technique, his powerful right hand which allowed him to play loud and fast with a very warm and satisfying tone. In a nutshell, Django's right-hand technique is a plectrum version of the commonly used classical guitar finger stroke known as *apoyando* or "rest-

stroke." The plectrum version of this technique has all the benefits of the fingerstyle stroke-reduced fret buzz, a secure feeling of placement, reduced muscle tension, and a loud, full tone. In addition, the plectrum rest-stroke takes advantage of basic principles of physics by using the weight of the hand, instead of the muscles, to propel the pick in much the same manner as a hammer falls on a nail. Unlike the more commonly used free stroke, which activates the string by pushing the pick through the string, the rest-stroke activates the string by letting the pick hand fall, using gravity rather than your muscles, to provide the necessary force. A rest-stroke is completed by letting the pick rest on the next adjacent string; hence the name "rest-stroke." The result is volume, tone, and speed without the discomfort of tense muscles in your wrist and forearm. This subject will be covered in more detail in the explanation and exercises later in this book.

*Origin of the rest-stroke.* The origin of the rest-stroke plectrum technique among the Sinti remains somewhat of a mystery. Here are three possible theories:

- 1) Django inherited this technique through Sinti oral traditions of instrument technique. Many Sinti musicians are descendants of musical dynasties that have their origins among the professionally trained Gypsy orchestras of Hungary. Repertoire and technique have been passed down through Sinti families for generations with such exacting accuracy that families such as the Limbergers<sup>1</sup> still perform authentic Hungarian music after living in Western Europe for at least five generations. I've seen Gypsies from the Balkans use the rest-stroke technique on plectrum instruments such as the Greek *lauoto* and *bozouki*, the Romanian *cobză*, and the Turkish *oud*. However, plectrum instruments have traditionally not been used in Hungarian ensembles, and there is no evidence of a virtuosic plectrum tradition among the Sinti before Django.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Contact the Sinti Organization for their compilation CD *Weile meer Sinti ham* which includes performances of jazz and Hungarian music by the Limberger family (who perform under the name Piotto's) and other Dutch Sinti musicians. Contact information: Landelijke Sinti Organisatie, Oranjestraat 75 a, 5682 CB Best, Nederland. Phone: (31) 499-379471 Fax: (31) 499-377868

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that many Gypsy ensembles (such as the Mirandos and the Limbergers of The Netherlands) replaced the traditional *cymbalom* (a Hungarian hammered dulcimer) with the more portable guitar and to my ear, the sound of the *cymbalom* has been a significant influence on the aesthetic of Gypsy guitar playing. Palm Guitars music shop in Amsterdam ([www.palmguitars.nl](http://www.palmguitars.nl)) has a guitar compilation CD available entitled "Favorite Strings" which includes a performance of Nello Mirando playing in the *cymbalom* guitar style.

- 2) The rest-stroke plectrum technique was favored by American jazz tenor banjo players active in the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout his teens Django accompanied musette accordion players on the banjo-guitar (a six-string banjo tuned like a guitar) and most likely began using the rest-stroke technique during this period of his musical development. Perhaps the rest-stroke technique accompanied the banjo on its transatlantic journey from America into the hands of Parisian dance hall musicians and subsequently became the technique used for Gypsy jazz music.
- 3) Django's use of rest-stroke picking could simply be a case of coincidental invention (that is, the same problem [more or less] being solved with the same solution [more or less] in multiple locations without any communication among the respective inventors). Django and his contemporaries in Paris may have come to the conclusion that using the rest-stroke was the most effective way to solve the problem of picking in their particular context. Other technically brilliant jazz guitarists such as Joe Pass and Larry Coryell have also independently discovered the advantages of the rest-stroke technique. Tuck Andress, more known for his fingerpicking, wrote a treatise on picking technique in which he concludes that even in a modern jazz context rest-strokes are the most effective way to use the plectrum.<sup>3</sup>



(L to R)  
*Paulus Schäfer,*  
*Sharona Schäfer.*  
Photographer:  
Michael Horowitz

<sup>3</sup> [www.tuckandpatti.com/pick-finger\\_tech.html](http://www.tuckandpatti.com/pick-finger_tech.html)

# Part Two

## Fundamentals

**I**n this section, I will provide complete information about the things you need to do and be aware of to effectively play Gypsy jazz. We start with what you need to know about your technique.

### Changing Your Technique

At least once in their careers, most musicians reach a dead end technically and, in order to improve, they must make some fundamental changes in their technique. Examples abound: Because of severe tendonitis, the fingerstyle guitar virtuoso Leo Kottke was forced to take a long hiatus from performing to relearn the more ergonomic classical right-hand technique. To meet the demands of performing as a guitar/vocal duet, Tuck Andress switched from pickstyle to fingerstyle playing; and during the late 1970s John McLaughlin, who had been a virtuosic electric player for years, struggled to rework his technique for acoustic playing. Chet Baker was forced to relearn his trumpet embouchure after a severe beating, and, of course Django had to relearn how to play the guitar with two fingers after his hand had been scarred from a fire.

During my research in The Netherlands I reached such a technical dead end myself. After years of playing straight-ahead jazz, I had developed a very fast alter-

nate picking technique which allowed me to play much of the horn-based bebop vocabulary on electric guitar. While this technique was well suited for amplified playing, it was useless on the acoustic guitar except in very quiet situations. Furthermore, I was frustrated trying to learn Django's solos since much of the standard vocabulary used in Django's music is actually harder to play with alternate picking. For these reasons, I made the very serious decision to rebuild my technique from the ground up. It took me six months of diligent focused daily practice to be able to improvise again at medium tempos. I had to go through every phrase, piece, and melody I knew and rework the picking. Even after a year of doing so, I still can't play *everything* I used to play using alternate picking. The benefit, however, is that I can play much, much louder with a very satisfying tone, even on very modest instruments. Furthermore, I now find that most of Django's phrases are very natural to play. With the rest-stroke technique even his breathtaking chromatic passages, lightning-fast arpeggios, and perfectly timed tremolos seem well within reach.

## Guidelines for Reworking Your Right-hand Technique

- 1) *How long will it take?* It depends on how much time you have to practice and the quality of your practice time (see "Practice Suggestions" below). I was fortunate to have the luxury of practicing eight hours a day on a regular basis so the basics came quickly, and after six months I felt fairly confident about playing in public at medium tempos.
- 2) *If possible, commit totally to the new technique.* If you can take a hiatus from performing for at least six months, then you'll learn much faster. If you try to mix your old technique with the rest-stroke approach too soon in your development then it will be very difficult to master the required motions. I don't use free-stroke alternate picking at all anymore and find that with some tweaking of left-hand fingerings, I can play nearly everything I could play previously (including bebop lines). With that said, I think there is a place for mixing free-stroke alternate picking with the rest-stroke technique to achieve certain phrasings or to execute certain tricky string combinations. Here is a breakdown of what rest-stroke picking can and can't do for you:



## Rest-stroke Picking

*What it's good at:*

- ♦ Achieving volume and tone on an acoustic instrument
- ♦ Executing phrases played by Django and other Sinti guitarists
  - ✧ Chromatic runs
  - ✧ Fast-swept arpeggiated patterns
  - ✧ Horizontal scale and arpeggio fingerings
  - ✧ Django style triplet patterns

*What it's bad at:*

- ♦ Complicated string crossing patterns at high speeds
- ♦ Bebop style rhythmic phrasings<sup>4</sup>
- ♦ "Cross picked" arpeggiated patterns

Again, try to avoid mixing the rest-stroke technique with your old one. Don't give up too easily on a particular phrase that is giving you problems. Often, some small changes in left-hand fingering will allow you to execute a problematic phrase.

- 3) *Try to fix the image of this technique done properly in your mind.* If you're fortunate to live close to someone who has mastered this technique, then go and watch him or her play as much as possible. If not, then try and get a copy of the Django Legacy or any other video with good footage of Sinti guitarists and watch it carefully over and over again.<sup>5</sup>
- 4) *Periodically test your progress in low-stress situations, such as jams with friends or small gigs.* It's always harder to perform in public so these situations provide a good indicator of how well you've internalized your new technique. Don't be too hard on yourself if you find yourself stumbling through things you used to play effortlessly. It's part of the learning process, and it will come with time and practice.

<sup>4</sup>The Gypsy guitar virtuoso Bireli Lagrene has successfully adapted the rest-stroke technique to more modern styles of jazz such as bebop and fusion. Therefore it is possible to phrase bebop lines with rest-strokes, you just have to be careful because rest-stroke style picking will naturally phrase your lines straighter than is desirable for bebop.

<sup>5</sup>Djangobooks.Com has plans to release a video demonstrating the rest-stroke technique in the future. Check my website for the release date.

## Practice Guidelines

- 1) *Slow down!* When you practice, you're programming your muscle memory to perform the movements required to play the guitar. Unfortunately, your muscles don't discern between sloppy playing and clean playing so they'll learn to do whatever movement you keep repeating. If that movement is sloppy, then that's the way you'll always play unless you go back and relearn it at a slower tempo. *You play the way you practice, so always practice playing with control.*
- 2) *Use a metronome.* In order to learn how to play with good time, you must practice everything with a metronome. Chances are that the reason you can't play a difficult passage is not because you can't play fast enough but because you are rushing. If you are having trouble with a particular passage then slow it down and make sure every note is played perfectly in time. Start by singing the phrase first and then playing it slowly. *Let the music dictate what your hands will do, not vice versa.* Once you master it gradually increase the metronome setting. If it gets too hard, go back to a tempo with which you're comfortable. *Simple ideas played with perfect time always sound better than complex ideas played sloppily.*
- 3) *Maintain a regular routine.* Regular repetition is the best way to improve. Even if you have limited time, try to keep your practice sessions at regular intervals. Practicing five hours once a week is less effective than practicing thirty minutes every day.
- 4) *Develop a systematic practice regime.* Identify your weak areas and make them the focus of your practice time. Make a list of these things, or even better write them out (in tab or staff notation), and organize them into a binder that you can regularly play through. Having all the songs, phrases, exercises, and so forth that you're working on in one easily accessible book will ensure you'll repeat them over and over. When you master something, move it to a different section of the book and add something new to the ones you're still working on. Every so often, you can revisit the "mastered" section to jog your memory.

- 5) *Analyze your playing visually and audibly.* Record yourself playing, then listen to it carefully. Identify your weak points and strive to improve them. Also, use a mirror while you practice or even better videotape yourself playing. Are you using the motions described in this book? If not, sit in front of a mirror and adjust your movements accordingly.
- 6) *Anticipate performance situations during your practice sessions.* You'll be the most at ease when you perform if you've already accustomed yourself to the situation in which you'll be performing. For example, if you expect to perform without amplification, especially at festival jam sessions, then get used to playing with good projection. Play along with a CD at a relatively high volume to simulate a barrage of rhythm guitars trying to drown you out. Or if you expect to play with musicians who play at fast tempos, work out some simple, easily executable ideas that sound good when played fast and practice them at increasingly fast tempos.
- 7) *Analyze problems.* Some things just require time and practice, but if you feel like you've reached a dead end with a particular phrase or technique you should carefully analyze the problem. Here are some common problems:
  - ♦ Inefficient left-hand fingering
  - ♦ Inefficient picking pattern
  - ♦ Rushing
  - ♦ Too much muscle tension
- 8) *When you're playing a gig, forget about all this and just have fun!*

## Body Position

Most average-sized people will naturally hold the guitar in a position that is appropriate for plectrum-style playing (see Figure 1). However, there can be problems and here are a few of the most common:

- 1) *Trying too hard to hold the guitar in place with the right arm, resulting in counterproductive muscle tension.* Make sure your right arm is relaxed. Its mere presence is enough to hold the guitar in place. In footage of Django playing he's often so loose that the guitar keeps sliding away from him, making it necessary for him to periodically nudge it back into place between phrases of his solo.



**Figure 1: Proper Body Position**

- 2) *The guitar is sitting too low in relation to your upper body.* Try using a footstool under your right foot to boost the height of your leg. This will raise the guitar up closer towards your head. A small pillow between your guitar and leg also works. In the absence of either of these devices, simply lift the heel of your right foot, or buy a guitar with a bigger body.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The French Gypsy virtuoso Angelo Debarre uses his left foot as a substitute for a foot stool. He tilts his left foot sideways and places his right foot on top of it, thereby raising the height of his right leg.

- 3) *The neck of the guitar is pointed too low.* The neck should be tilted up slightly to improve access to the fret board. Never tilt the neck toward the ground.
- 4) *The guitar is being held so closely that its back is in contact with your torso.* Only the top section of the guitar's back should make contact with your body. Pressing the guitar against your abdomen significantly dampens the instrument's sound production.
- 5) Keep a straight back and avoid slouching over the guitar. If you're having trouble seeing the fret board, then slightly tilt the top of the guitar towards you instead of bending your torso over the neck.
- 6) Put all your energy into your hands. Sinti musicians learn from a young age to keep their bodies entirely still while playing. Swaying your torso, excessive foot-stomping, and head-bobbing all divert your attention from your hands that are trying their best to execute the very precise motions you've trained them to do. Don't be afraid to look boring; if you're playing well, no one will care.

## Plectrums

Plectrums used for Gypsy jazz music are generally very stiff and thick.<sup>7</sup> Materials such as horn, bone, coconut, wood, tortoise shell, and various plastics have been used successfully. Many Gypsies use large reshaped plastic or wood buttons quite effectively. Tortoise is considered by most as the ideal material and is most likely what Django used. Luckily for tortoises, they are a protected species so you are unlikely to find a supplier of fresh shells. However, you can often find tortoise on old jewellery boxes and mirrors. Check your grandmother's attic or some yard sales for such items. For Gypsy jazz players, one of the most popular alternatives to tortoise is the synthetic Wegen pick ([www.wegenpicks.com](http://www.wegenpicks.com)). The French pick maker Jean-Charles Dugain fashions picks from a wide range of material including wood, bone, coconut, stone, metals, and synthetics. Among the more common mass produced picks I've found that sound good are the Dunlop 500 1.5mm and the Dunlop Jazz Tone 208. One of the best bargains is the ergonomically contoured John Pearse Sarod pick, which is made of ebony or rosewood and costs about \$3. They are made with both

<sup>7</sup>I've been fortunate to examine picks used by some of the top Gypsy jazz virtuosos and was surprised to find that many of them used very small, thin picks. However, even when a smaller pick is utilized the material is always very dense and rigid.

pointy and rounded tips. The rounded version is preferable for Gypsy jazz playing. Once you master rest-stroke picking, you'll find that you can get a good tone out of nearly any type of pick as long as it is made of a dense, rigid material.

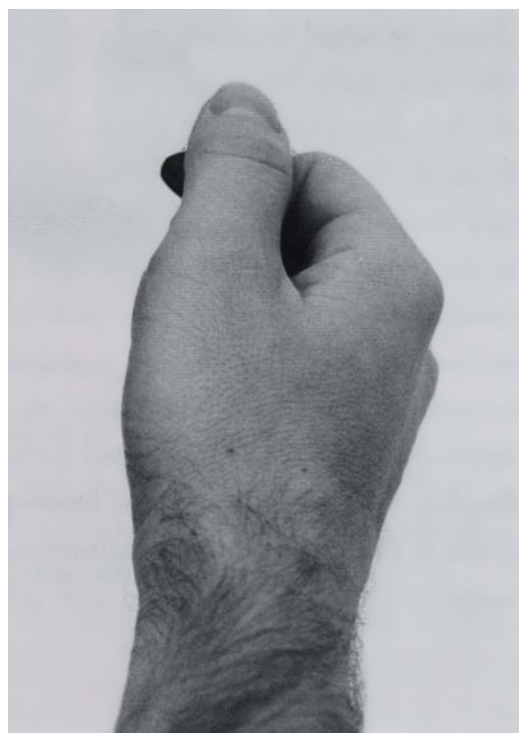
## Holding the pick

You want your hand to be as relaxed as possible, to the point where you are nearly dropping the pick. To achieve this you must avoid pinching the pick because that results in excessive muscle tension. Instead:

- 1) Rotate your right hand so the left side of your index finger is facing upwards.
- 2) Curl your fingers in slightly, about halfway between an open hand and a closed fist.
- 3) Place the pick between the tip of your index finger and the first joint. Make sure the point of the pick is perpendicular to your finger (see Figure 2).
- 4) Place your thumb over the pick so that the thumb is contacting the pick somewhere between the center of thumb and the first joint. If you're doing this properly, then the top part of your thumb should extend beyond the pick (see Figure 3).



**Figure 2:** Holding the Pick  
(Without Thumb)



**Figure 3:** Holding the Pick  
(With Thumb)

*“Anyone who plays guitar is our friend.”*

*—Stanley Schäfer (brother of Paulus Schäfer)*

Holding the pick this way allows you to get a firm grip on the pick with out excessive muscle tension. Its a good sign if you drop the pick during the early stages of learning this technique since it indicates that you're not trying to pinch the pick too hard with your muscles.

## Hand Position

The hand position used in Gypsy jazz is commonly referred to as a "floating hand" technique because the hand is completely free of the guitar. Playing with the hand free of the guitar improves mobility and allows the top of the guitar to vibrate freely.

- 1) Place your forearm on the upperbout of the guitar about one-to-two inches from the elbow (see Figures 4 and 5).
- 2) Let your hand hang down over the strings about halfway between the bridge and the sound hole. It should naturally hang at about a 45-degree angle.
- 3) Make sure the hand is floating above the bridge. *Under no circumstances should your hand make contact with the bridge.* This will only result in unnecessary tension, lack of mobility, and deadening of sound.

This is the basic position. Most players, including Django, uncurl their fingers somewhat and let them gently brush against the top of the guitar to provide a sense of positioning. The key is *gently* brush against the top. Pressing hard will deaden the top of the guitar and tense up your hand. *Under no circumstances should you press or plant your fingertips or palm on top of the guitar.* (Again, see Figure 5.)

Some players, such as French Manouche<sup>8</sup> virtuoso Raphaël Faÿs, keep their right hand completely off the top of the guitar. This is harder to master, but helps provide additional volume and mobility. With this technique, a sense of position is accomplished by gently brushing the backs of your fingers over the strings while picking. It might feel a little uncomfortable at first, but eventually you'll develop calluses on the back of your fingers.

<sup>8</sup>The Manouche are the French branch of the Sinti ethnic group.



**Figure 4:** Hand Position (Frontal)



**Figure 5:** Hand Position (Player's View)



# Part Three

## Basic Techniques and Picking Patterns

**T**he following section will provide explanations and written examples of the basic techniques used in rest-stroke picking. Read the explanation for each pattern first then try playing through the example. Always use a metronome and take it slow at first, making sure your movements are precise. This is the fastest way to master these techniques.

Make these exercises a part of your daily practice routine for at least six months.

These examples all use open strings so you can concentrate on the right hand. Once you feel comfortable with the basic picking pattern, you can attempt to play some of the examples in the “Musical Examples” section that use the picking pattern you are working on. Always make sure you’ve mastered the basic pattern first; otherwise the more advanced phrases will always be sloppy. As a rule, the right hand should be trained to the point where the required motions are automatic before the left hand can be worked in.

## The Play-Relax Technique

To master rest-stroke picking, you must learn to quickly alternate your muscles between states of tension and relaxation. Of course, complete relaxation while playing the guitar is impossible. If you were completely relaxed, you'd be lying on the floor. The key is to learn to focus your effort by only using enough muscle tension to accomplish the required task and then quickly return to a state of relaxation. To learn this, you must make sure that after every pick stroke your right hand returns to a relaxed position.<sup>9</sup> Make sure there is a clear distinction in your movement between effort and relaxation. After diligent practice at slow tempos, you will eventually be able to achieve a state of dynamic relaxation at very fast tempos.

Every exercise in this book should be practiced using the play-relax technique.

## Picking Patterns

### Picking Pattern #1: Downstrokes

To play a rest-stroke with a pick, raise your hand about an inch above the low A string (see Figure 6), and then let it fall onto the A string (using gravity, not your muscles). The pick should fall through the A string causing it to sound and then come to rest automatically on the D string (see Figures 7 and 8). It's important to use a fairly wide motion, so be sure you start the stroke about an inch above the string. Even more critical is that you let the D string "catch" the pick, subsequently stopping the motion of your hand. When done properly, this technique achieves accuracy and volume with very little muscle tension.

Picking motion should always be generated from the wrist. Trying to pick the string using motion generated from your fingers or your entire arm will cause unnecessary tension, fatigue, and poor tone.

In general, the pick should strike the string at a 45-degree angle. The pick angle can be adjusted to achieve different tone colorations. The more parallel the pick is to the strings, the brighter the sound is. However, the resistance is greater and therefore less efficient. A warmer sound and less resistance can be achieved when the pick is rotated so it

<sup>9</sup> Masters such as Stochelo Rosenberg and Bireli Lagrene are so relaxed in between passages that the thumb of their right hand actually lets go of the pick entirely, allowing the pick to balance freely on the index finger.

*“You can blindfold me and have ten guitarists play and I’ll be able to pick out the Gypsy every time. No one else plays with the feeling that the Gypsies do.”*

*—Fapy Lafertin*

attacks the string at a more perpendicular angle. Extreme pick angles (either parallel or perpendicular) tend to be inefficient and unmusical.

When preparing for a downstroke, your hand should always raise the pick about an inch (distance of two strings) above the string you intend to hit. So if you intend to hit the G string, you should start by holding the pick above the A string and then letting it fall onto the G string.

When performing this technique on the top E string, it is impossible to play a rest-stroke since there is no other string to “catch” the pick. In this case, simply let the hand follow through and return to the starting position. The movement should be quite wide, so don’t be afraid to really let your hand fully follow through. Trying to use your muscles to limit the movement will only result in unnecessary tension, fatigue, and discomfort.



**Figure 6:** Preparing to Play a Downstroke on the A String



**Figure 7:** Completed Downstroke on the A String (Resting on the D String)



**Figure 8:** Resting on the D String (Close Up)

Begin your daily practice session with the exercise titled Picking Pattern #1.<sup>10</sup> Use a metronome and make sure you are relaxed and producing a

<sup>10</sup> In the notated examples, a downstroke is indicated with the "▼" symbol

clear sound. If you are having any problems, you are playing too fast. Slow the metronome down until your playing is relaxed and accurate.

When changing strings, do not "sweep" onto the next string. Sweeping will be discussed later. At this point change strings by positioning the pick an inch above the new string and letting it fall.



## Picking Pattern #1 (Downstrokes)

### CD Track #2

## Picking Pattern #2: Upstrokes

Upstrokes are used in this technique but not in the same way a guitarist uses upstrokes for strict alternate picking. The following guidelines will help you determine when to use an upstroke:

- 1) When changing strings, always use a downstroke. This applies to string changes in any direction.
- 2) When playing consecutive notes on the same string, upstrokes may be used depending on the tempo and desired phrasing.
- 3) Usually the first note, and almost always the last note of a phrase, is a downstroke.<sup>11</sup>
- 4) An upstroke may be used to begin a phrase which starts on a higher string and progresses to consecutive lower strings (see Picking Pattern #3).

<sup>11</sup>When it is awkward to end a phrase with a downstroke, a very strong upstroke with a large follow through can be used to create a strong accent.

To play an upstroke:

- ◆ Start by playing a downstroke on the D string so your pick is now resting on the G string.
- ◆ Lift the pick back up at a 45-degree angle so that it strikes the D string then follows through so that it is hanging in the air above the low E string.
- ◆ Your hand is now in position to play another downstroke.

Picking Pattern #2 demonstrates the simplest use of upstrokes.<sup>12</sup> This example works out to be straight alternate picking because four notes are being played on each string. Make sure your downstrokes are rest-strokes. The arc of your upstrokes should be wide enough so that you're producing enough volume to equal that of your downstrokes. At slow-to-medium tempos, your upstroke should raise up two strings higher or about an inch higher than the string you intend to strike with the next downstroke. So if you play an upstroke on the D string, the pick should go up above the low E string and then fall back down on the D string as a rest-stroke.



## Picking Pattern #2 (Upstrokes)

### CD Track #3

The musical notation for Picking Pattern #2 (Upstrokes) is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass staff. The treble staff shows a sequence of notes with downstrokes (indicated by a small square) and upstrokes (indicated by a 'V' symbol). The bass staff shows the corresponding string positions (T, A, B) and fret numbers (0, 1, 2, 3).

<sup>12</sup>In the notated examples, an upstroke is indicated with the "V" symbol.

## Picking pattern #3: Swept-Strikes

A swept-stroke is a downstroke in which you start from the resting position and "push" through the string, rather than raising the hand up and letting it fall.<sup>13</sup> A swept-stroke is usually preceded by a rest-stroke, so the pick will already be resting against the string which will be swept.

Picking Pattern #3 will develop your ability to play swept-strokes. Django made extensive use of this pattern.

- ♦ It starts with an upstroke on the high E string, which is necessary to allow you to jump down to the G string. Make sure you follow through completely on the first upstroke, so your hand is in position to fall onto the G string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the G string, allowing the pick to rest against the B string.
- ♦ Now, instead of raising your hand up to play another downstroke, just push the pick through the B string so that it rests on the high E string.
- ♦ Again push the pick through E string, letting your hand follow through towards the ground without trying to stop it with your muscles.
- ♦ You have now completed the pattern and are ready to start with the first upstroke again.



## Picking Pattern #3 (Swept-Strikes)

### CD Track #4

<sup>13</sup> In the notated examples, a swept-stroke is indicated with a "S" symbol.

## Picking Pattern #4: Syncopated Pattern

Picking Pattern #4 is a three-note syncopated pattern which was used by Django.

- ◆ It starts with a downstroke on the low E string, ending with your pick resting against the A string.
- ◆ Now, perform a swept downstroke on the A string, ending with your pick resting against the D string.
- ◆ The A string is played again with an upstroke and then the pattern repeats itself.



### Picking Pattern #4 (Syncopated Pattern)

#### CD Track #5

## Picking Pattern #5: Arpeggio Picking

Picking Pattern #5 will develop your ability to play consecutive ascending and descending arpeggios. The first four eighth-notes of the example use sweep picking to move from the D string to the high E string. The second four eighth-notes use an upstroke and the three downstrokes to move from the high E string to back to the D string. The up, down, down, down pattern is a picking pattern commonly used by Gypsy guitarists when moving to consecutive lower strings.

- ◆ Start with a rest-stroke on the D string ending with the pick resting against the G string.
- ◆ Sweep through the G string and rest on the B string.
- ◆ Sweep through the B string and rest on the E string.
- ◆ Sweep through the E string and let your hand follow through.
- ◆ Play an upstroke on the high E string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the B string and rest on the E string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the G string and rest on the B string.



- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string and rest on the G string.
- ♦ The pattern now repeats its self with another downstroke on the D string.



## Picking Pattern #5 (Arpeggio Picking)

### CD Track #6

## Picking Pattern #6: Horizontal Arpeggio

Picking Pattern #6 will allow you to play arpeggios which are fingered horizontally across the neck. Notice that when the pattern reaches the high E string, two downstrokes are played in a row and then followed by an upstroke and a string change. When an odd number of notes must be played on a single string and then followed by a downward string change, it is more efficient to play two downstrokes in a row so that the last pick stroke before the string change is an upstroke (i.e., down, down, up). If you didn't play two downstrokes in a row then the note before the string change would be a downstroke, a motion which becomes difficult to execute at faster tempos. At slower tempos this technique is not necessary, but when playing at faster tempos keep in mind that *downward string changes are almost always easier when preceded by an upstroke*. And, *playing two consecutive downstrokes on one string is more efficient than two consecutive downstrokes on a downward string change*. However, there are exceptions so there is no catchall rule that applies to this technique. Use whatever technique provides the most musical solution to the technical problem you are trying to overcome.

- ♦ Start with a downstroke on the low E string and rest on the A string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the low E string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the A string and rest on the D string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the D string and rest on the G string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the D string.

- ◆ Play a downstroke on the G string and rest on the B string.
- ◆ Play a swept-stroke on the B string and rest on the high E string.
- ◆ Play a swept-stroke on the high E string and follow through.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the high E string and follow through.
- ◆ Play an upstroke on the high E string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the B string and rest on the high E string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the G string and rest on the B string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the D string and rest on the G string.
- ◆ Play an upstroke on the D string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the A string and rest on the D string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the low E string and rest on the A string.
- ◆ Repeat the pattern with an upstroke on the low E string.



## Picking Pattern #6 (Horizontal Arpeggio)

### CD Track #7

## Picking Pattern #7: Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio

Picking Pattern #7 is a modified version of the Horizontal Picking Pattern in which an odd number of notes is played on every string (either one or three notes per string). This allows for string changes to always be swept-strokes. This movement is very efficient and, with practice, can be done at very fast tempos. The odd-string pattern is only effective when ascending. The last string has an even number of notes (two eighth-notes) and can either be played as two downstrokes or, at very fast tempos, as a downstroke followed by an upstroke.

- ♦ Start with a downstroke on the low E string and rest on the A string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the low E string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the low E string and rest on the A string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the A string and rest on the D string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the D string and rest on the G string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the D string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string and rest on the G string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the G string and rest on the B string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the B string and rest on the high E string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the B string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the B string and rest on the high E string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the high E string and follow through.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the high E string and follow through.



## Picking Pattern #7 (Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio)

### CD Track #8

The musical notation for Picking Pattern #7 is shown in two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a C-clef, and the bottom staff is a bass clef with a C-clef. The notation includes various symbols like 'V' for downstrokes, 'U' for upstrokes, and 'S' for swept-strokes. The pattern is designed to be played on the strings of a guitar, with the top staff representing the higher strings and the bottom staff representing the lower strings.

## Picking Pattern #8: Triplet Pattern #1

Picking Pattern #8 is a commonly used triplet pattern. Notice that unlike Picking Pattern #6, downward string changes are always preceded by downstrokes. This may seem inefficient but because it is a triplet pattern the phrasing works better with straight down up down picking.

- ◆ Begin with a downstroke on the high E string and let your hand follow through.
- ◆ Now play an upstroke on the high E.
- ◆ Play another downstroke on the high E and let your hand follow.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the B string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ◆ Play an upstroke on the B string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the B string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ◆ Now repeat the pattern by performing a swept-stroke on the high string.



## Picking Pattern #8 (Triplet Pattern #1)

### CD Track #9

## Picking Pattern #9: Triplet Pattern #2

Picking Pattern #9 is a triplet pattern played over four strings. Notice that the down up down picking pattern is maintained throughout the whole pattern.

- ♦ Begin with a downstroke on the high E string and let your hand follow through.
- ♦ Now play an upstroke on the high E.
- ♦ Play another downstroke on the high E and let your hand follow through.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the B string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the B string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the G string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the D string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ♦ Play another downstroke on the D string and let the pick rest against the G string.
- ♦ Now repeat the pattern by playing a downstroke on the high E string.



## Picking Pattern #9 (Triplet Pattern #2)

### CD Track #10

The musical notation for Picking Pattern #9 (Triplet Pattern #2) is shown below. It consists of a treble clef staff and a four-string guitar staff (labeled T, A, B). The treble staff shows a sequence of triplets of eighth notes, with downstrokes (V) and upstrokes (^) indicated. The guitar staff shows the corresponding fret positions (0) for each note.

## Picking Pattern #10: Triplet Pattern #3

Picking Pattern #10 is a triplet pattern commonly used by contemporary Sinti guitarists, such as Jimmy Rosenberg, Stochelo Rosenberg, and Paulus Schäfer. Notice that Picking Pattern #10 is similar to Picking Pattern #6 in that two consecutive downstrokes are played on the top E string and then followed by an upstroke and a string change.

- ◆ Begin with a downstroke on the high E string and let your hand follow through.
- ◆ Now play an upstroke on the high E.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the B string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ◆ Play a downstroke on the G string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ◆ Play a swept-stroke on the B string and let the pick rest against the string.
- ◆ Play a swept-stroke on the E string and let your hand follow through.
- ◆ Now repeat the pattern by playing a downstroke on the high E string.



### Picking Pattern #10 (Triplet Pattern #3)

#### CD Track #11

## Picking pattern #11: Double Bass pattern

Picking Pattern #11 is a pattern that is used by Gypsies for accompanying ballads or for solo guitar pieces. I've named this pattern "double bass" because consecutive bass notes fall on both the "and" of beats 2 and 4 and right on beats 1 and 3.

- ♦ Start by playing a downstroke on the low E string ending with the pick resting against the A string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string ending with the pick resting against the G string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the G string ending with the pick resting against the B string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the low E string ending with the pick resting against the A string.
- ♦ Begin the pattern again with another downstroke on the low E string.



### Picking Pattern #11 (Double Bass Pattern)

CD Track #12

### Picking Pattern #12: Double Bass Pattern (Triplets)

Picking Pattern #12 is the double-bass pattern modified to be played as eighth-note triplets.

- ♦ Start by playing a downstroke on the low E string ending with the pick resting against the A string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the D string ending with the pick resting against the G string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the G string ending with the pick resting against the B string.
- ♦ Play a swept-stroke on the B string ending with the pick resting against the high E string.
- ♦ Play a downstroke on the G string ending with the pick resting against the B string.

◆ Play a downstroke on the low E string ending with the pick resting against the A string.

◆ Begin the pattern again with another downstroke on the low E string.



## Picking Pattern #12 (Double Bass Pattern [Triplets])

CD Track #13

The musical notation for Picking Pattern #12 consists of two systems. Each system has a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff shows a C-clef and a 3/4 time signature. The bass staff shows a 3/4 time signature. The notes are: E2, A2, D3 in the first measure and E2, A2, D3 in the second measure. The notes are grouped in triplets.

## Tremolo Picking

Django often used tremolos for single notes, doublestops, and entire chords. The important thing to remember when performing this technique is that *tremolos are played in time*. Usually, tremolos are played as sixteenth-notes or eighth-note triplets. At very fast tempos, tremolos can be played as straight eighth-notes, and at very slow tempos as thirty-second notes. Always practice tremolos with a metronome.

*“Anyone can master the left hand. It’s the right hand technique of the Gypsies which makes Gypsy jazz music unique.”*

*– Jan Limberger*



## Picking Pattern #13: Single Note Tremolo

Single-note tremolos are nothing more than very fast alternate picking. Picking Pattern #13 is a sixteenth-note tremolo. To play Picking Pattern #13 simply:

- ♦ Play a downstroke on the B string letting the pick rest against the E string.
- ♦ Play an upstroke on the B string.
- ♦ Start the pattern over with a downstroke on the B string.

Even at faster tempos make sure the motion is coming from your wrist. Avoid locking your wrist and generating the motion from your forearm.



## Picking Pattern #13 (Single Note Tremolo)

CD Track #14

The musical notation for Picking Pattern #13 consists of a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of sixteenth notes on the B string. Below the staff are three staves labeled T, A, and B. The T staff contains a sequence of 0s representing fret numbers. The A and B staves are empty.

## Picking Pattern #14: Two String Tremolo

When performing a tremolo on two or more strings you will have to abandon the rest-stroke picking technique and replace it with a very refined strumming motion.

- ♦ Curl the fingers of your right hand into a loose fist.
- ♦ Strum in a downward direction so that the pick strikes both the B and high E strings.
- ♦ Strum in an upward direction so that you strike both the high E string and the B string.
- ♦ Repeat the pattern with another downward strum.

Make sure the motion is generated from your wrist and that your muscles are relaxed. It should feel like shaking out a match. Always practice this technique with a metronome to ensure that your tremolo is in time.

Picking Pattern #14 is a sixteenth-note tremolo.



## Picking Pattern #14 (Two String Tremolo)

CD Track #15

## Picking Pattern #15: Two String Tremolo (Triplet)

Picking Pattern #15 is an example of a two-string tremolo played as eighth-note triplets. Notice that Picking Pattern #15 uses a strumming pattern that has two consecutive down strokes (down, up, down, down, up, down). This allows for an accent on the beginning of each beat which creates a stronger triplet feel. At very fast tempos, this example can be played with straight alternate strumming timed as eighth-note triplets.

- ◆ Strum in a downward direction so that the pick strikes both the B and high E strings.
- ◆ Strum in an upward direction so that you strike both the high E string and the B string.
- ◆ Strum in a downward direction so that the pick strikes both the B and high E strings.
- ◆ Repeat the pattern, starting with another downward strum.



## Picking Pattern #15 (Two String Tremolo [Triplet])

CD Track #16

# Part Four

## Musical Examples

**T**his section is organized by the picking pattern #s demonstrated in the Picking Patterns section of the tutorial. Once you master the basic open-string example of a particular pattern, you can look up the corresponding picking pattern # in this section and find examples of actual phrases that Django and contemporary Sinti guitarists use in their improvisations. Many of these examples are very challenging, so make sure you've completely mastered the basic picking pattern before attempting them.

Suggested left-hand fingerings are included with the following examples. Although Django would have fingered most of these phrases with only his index and middle fingers, I've decided to use the two-finger system only when it's the best way to play a particular phrase.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Most contemporary Gypsy guitarists use all five fingers of their left hand. Despite Django's precedent for two finger virtuosity, most Gypsy guitarists only limit themselves to just the index and middle finger when it is the most ergonomical way to play a particular passage.

## Picking Pattern #2

The following two exercises (Ex. 2.1 and 2.2) are chromatic runs that Django often used. Take note that these runs are not entirely chromatic. They use four notes per string (except when ascending on the first string) regardless of whether or not pure chromaticism is achieved. This method is much easier to execute than a purely chromatic run, which requires a more complicated picking motion. Sinti musicians use both pure chromatic runs and the four note per string method.



### Example 2.1 (Descending Chromatic Run)

CD Track #17

3 2 1 0 3 2 1 0 3 2 1 0 3 2 1 0 3 2 1 0

T A B



### Example 2.2 (Ascending Chromatic Run)

CD Track #18

1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2

T A B

0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3

4 5 6 7 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

T A B

## Picking Pattern #3

The following sweeping diminished pattern (Ex. 3.1) was one of the cornerstones of Django's improvisational vocabulary. This example was transcribed from Django's fifth chorus of *Dark Eyes* (1947).



### Example 3.1 (Diminished Sweep)

CD Track #19

Example 3.1 (Diminished Sweep) musical notation. The notation is presented in two systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff below it. The first system is labeled with chords A<sup>7</sup> and Dm<sup>6</sup>. The second system is labeled with chords A<sup>7</sup> and D<sup>7</sup>. The notation includes fingerings (1, 2, 3) and picking directions (V for downstroke, □ for upstroke). The tablature shows fret numbers (0, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13) and string numbers (T, A, B).

The following (Ex. 3.2) is an example of the same picking pattern used over a chord progression similar to the A section of the Django Reinhardt composition entitled *Djangology*. The British guitarist Robin Nolan frequently uses this idea in his improvisations. A similar idea is used by <sup>15</sup>Stochelo Rosenberg in his unaccompanied guitar piece *Stéphanesque*.

*“Jazz is not Gypsy music, but we play it in our own way.  
Nobody else plays jazz like we do.”*

*—Jan Limberger*

<sup>15</sup>“Stéphanesque” appears on the Rosenberg Trio CD entitled *Caravan* (Verve 314 523 030-2).



## Example 3.2 (Chordal Sweep "Pickology")

### CD Track #20

A<sup>9</sup>                      D13(b9)                      GM<sup>9</sup>                      A7(b9)

Am<sup>7</sup>                      D<sup>7</sup>                      GM

## Picking Pattern #4

Django used variations of the following three-note syncopated pattern often. The following (Ex. 4.1) was transcribed from Django's fourth chorus of *Dark Eyes* (1947).



Jan Brouwer



## Example 4.1 (Three Note Syncopated)

CD Track #21

A<sup>7</sup> Dm

T  
A  
B

A<sup>7</sup> Dm

T  
A  
B

The following example (Ex. 4.2) is an imitation of a Romanian cymbalom accompaniment pattern. Fapy Lafertin uses it when performing Hungarian and Romanian music. The French Gypsy virtuoso Boulou Ferré used a variation of this technique in his recording of *Mitcho Pelo*.<sup>16</sup> Notice that it is an eighth-note triplet pattern, which differs from the previous syncopated eighth-note pattern. The picking is the same for both, but the relationship to the beat is different.

*“Nous’che, Wasso, Stochelo, and a lot of the other older musicians would test us when we were little. They would play a song and intentionally put mistakes in it. Those of us who could hear the mistakes passed the test and got special attention from then on.”*

*—Paulus Schäfer*

<sup>16</sup>“Mitcho Pelo” appears on the Boulou Ferré CD *Pour Django* (SteepleChase SCCD-31120).



### Example 4.2 (Cymbalom Pattern)

## CD Track #22

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Wind" by The Beatles. It consists of two systems, each with a guitar part (top staff) and a bass part (bottom staff). The guitar part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bass part is written in bass clef. Both parts feature a repeating melodic line composed of eighth notes, with triplets indicated by a '3' above the staff. The guitar part includes a final measure with a whole note chord (F#4, A4, C5). The bass part includes a final measure with a whole note chord (F#2, A2, C3). The TAB notation for the guitar part is provided below the staff, showing fret numbers (0, 4, 5) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The bass part is written in standard notation and does not have a corresponding TAB line.

## Picking Pattern #5

The following chromatic ascending/descending (Ex. 5.1) arpeggio is an excellent technique builder. It also sounds good over dominant chords. Start the pattern on the third of the chord you want to play over. (For example, for D7 start on F#.)



**Piotto's.**  
(From L to R)  
***Harry Ter Haak,***  
***Jan Limberger,***  
***Storo Limberger,***  
***Bieske Limberger,***  
***and Martin***  
***Limberger.***  
Photographer:  
Dirk Greyf





The following quintuplet pattern (Ex. 5.2) was used by Django in his unaccompanied guitar piece *Improvisation No.1* (1937). Take note that it has one additional downstroke more than the conventional arpeggio picking pattern used in Example 5.1.



### Example 5.2 (Quintuplet Arpeggio Pattern)

CD Track #24

The following minor arpeggio pattern (Ex. 5.3) only uses the ascending sweeping motion of the conventional arpeggio picking pattern. Try using it whenever you have four measures of a minor chord to play over. (For example, *Minor Blues*, *Honeysuckle Rose*, *Douce Ambiance*, etc.)



### Example 5.3 (Minor Arpeggio Pattern)

CD Track #25

## Picking Pattern #6

The following A minor horizontal arpeggio (Ex. 6.1) is the foundation for many of Django's phrases. It also sounds great when played without any alteration.



### Example 6.1 (A Minor Horizontal Arpeggio)

CD Track #26

Am

Tablature (Fret Numbers):

System 1: 5 8 7 7 10 9 10 8 | 12 8 10 9 10 7 7 8

System 2: 5 8 7 7 10 9 10 8 | 12 8 10 9 10 7 7 8 | 5

The horizontal arpeggio pattern can also be used as a G Major arpeggio (Ex. 6.2) by simply raising the third-scale degree.

*“Know your arpeggios and understand how they connect.  
If you listen to Django that’s what he was doing.”*

*—Fapy Lafertin*



## Example 6.2 (G Major Horizontal Arpeggio)

CD Track #27

GM

Example 6.2 (G Major Horizontal Arpeggio) musical notation and tablature. The notation shows a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with various fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and pick strokes (V). Below the staff is a tablature section with two staves labeled T and B, showing fret numbers (3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

## Picking Pattern #7

The following example (Ex. 7.1) is a variation of the horizontal A minor arpeggio. An odd number of pick strokes per string is achieved by adding the second-scale degree to the pattern.



## Example 7.1 (A Minor Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio)

CD Track #28

Am

Example 7.1 (A Minor Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio) musical notation and tablature. The notation shows a treble clef, a key signature of no sharps or flats, and a common time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with various fingerings (1, 2) and pick strokes (V). Below the staff is a tablature section with two staves labeled T and B, showing fret numbers (5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

The following example (Ex. 7.2) is the major version of the odd-string horizontal arpeggio.



### Example 7.2 (G Major Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio)

CD Track #29

GM

The following example (Ex. 7.3) is the odd-string horizontal arpeggio modified for D minor starting on the 5th string.



### Example 7.3 (D Minor Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio [5th string])

CD Track #30

Dm

The following example (Ex. 7.4) is the odd-string horizontal arpeggio modified for D Major starting on the 5th string.

### Example 7.4 (D Major Odd String

### Horizontal Arpeggio [5th string])

CD Track #31

DM

T  
A  
B

5 7 9 7 7 9 11 10 10

## Picking Pattern #8

The following example (Ex. 8.1) is a guitar imitation of the "false fingerings" technique pioneered by Count Basie's tenor saxophonist Lester Young. This technique achieves a clever rhythmic effect by alternating between two different fingerings of the same pitch. The timbral differences between the two different fingerings add an interesting coloration to the sound. Django used false fingerings often.



*Martin Limberger*



### Example 8.1 (False Fingerings)

CD Track #32

Example 8.1 (False Fingerings) musical notation and guitar tablature. The notation shows a sequence of notes with fingerings (1, 3, 4) and slurs, indicating triplets. The guitar tablature shows fret numbers (5, 9/10, 10) and a final measure with a whole note on the 5th fret.

Variations of the following pentatonic-based pattern (Ex. 8.2) were used by Django later in his career and are also favored by contemporary Sinti guitarists.



### Example 8.2 (Pentatonic Pattern)

CD Track #33

Example 8.2 (Pentatonic Pattern) musical notation and guitar tablature. The notation shows a sequence of notes with fingerings (4, 3, 1) and slurs, indicating triplets. The guitar tablature shows fret numbers (8, 7, 5) and a final measure with a whole note on the 5th fret.

## Picking Pattern #9

The following pattern (Ex. 9.1) was one of Django's favorite ideas for playing over a dominant chord, especially during the bridge of *Honeysuckle Rose*.



### Example 9.1 (Dominant Triplet)

CD Track #34

D<sup>7</sup>

4 7 5 8 5 5 7 6 5 4

The following example (Ex.9.2) is a variation of this pattern adapted for a minor chord. Take note of the differences in picking between this and the previous example.



### Example 9.2 (Minor Triplet)

CD Track #35

A<sup>m</sup><sub>6</sub>

7 5 2 0 1 2 5 7 5 4

## Picking Pattern #10

The following pattern (Ex. 10.1) incorporates the commonly used "line cliché" harmonic device (that is, minor, minor [Maj7], minor 7, minor 6). It is often used by younger Dutch Sinti guitarists such as Jimmy Rosenberg, Stochelo Rosenberg and Paulus Schäfer. Try using it whenever you have two or more bars of a minor chord to play over.





## Example 10.1 (Triplet Line Cliché)

CD Track #36

Am Am(maj<sup>7</sup>) Am<sup>7</sup> Am<sup>6</sup> Dm

T  
A  
B

## Picking Pattern #11

The following diminished sequence (Ex. 11.1) sounds great with the double-bass picking pattern.



## Example 11.1 (Diminished Double Bass Pattern)

CD Track #37

D7(b<sup>9</sup>) D<sup>7</sup> D7(b<sup>9</sup>) D7(b<sup>9</sup>) D7(b<sup>9</sup>) D<sup>7</sup> D7(b<sup>9</sup>)

T  
A  
B

The following ascending minor chord pattern (Ex. 11.2) is used by Sinti guitarists for accompanying ballads or for solo guitar pieces. Notice that the double-bass picking pattern has been modified to accommodate for bass notes on the A and D strings.



## Example 11.2 (Minor Double Bass Pattern)

CD Track #38

Am  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \text{o} 2 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{Am} \end{array}$  Bm<sup>7(b5)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} 1 2 1 3 \text{x} \\ \text{Bm}^{7(b5)} \end{array}$  Am  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} 2 1 1 4 \text{x} \\ \text{Am} \end{array}$  Dm  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \text{o} 2 4 1 \\ \text{Dm} \end{array}$  Am  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \text{o} 2 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{Am} \end{array}$  FM  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \text{x} 4 2 1 \text{x} \\ \text{FM} \end{array}$  B<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} \text{x} \text{x} 4 2 1 \text{o} \\ \text{B}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$

## Picking Pattern #12

Below is a variation of the double-bass diminished pattern (Ex. 12.1) which has been modified to be played as eighth-note triplets.



## Example 12.1 (Diminished Double Bass Pattern [Triplets])

CD Track #39

E<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{E}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$  E<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{E}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$  8fr E<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{E}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$  9fr Gm<sup>7</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{Gm}^7 \end{array}$  8fr

A<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{A}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$  8fr A<sup>7(b9)</sup>  $\begin{array}{c} 2 \times 1 3 1 \text{x} \\ \text{A}^{7(b9)} \end{array}$  8fr

This baroque-sounding example (Ex. 12.2) is similar to a sequence used in Stochelo Rosenberg's solo guitar piece *Stéphanesque*. Take note of irregularities in the picking pattern in m. 5-7.



## Example 12.2 (Baroque Double Bass Pattern [Triplets])

CD Track #40

Em  $\times 2 \times 144$  9fr

B7(b9)  $\times 2 \times 131$  8fr

A<sup>9</sup>  $\times 2 \times 143$  6fr

D7(b9)  $\times 2 \times 131$  5fr

Gm<sup>9</sup>  $\times 2 \times 143$  3fr

C7(b9)  $\times 2 \times 131$  3fr

Fm<sup>9</sup>  $\times 2 \times 143$

B<sup>b</sup>7(b9)  $\times 2 \times 131$

Gm  $\times 1 \times 034$

A7(b9)  $\times 1 \times 020$

Dm  $\times \times 0231$

A7(b9)  $\times 2 \times 131 \times$  2fr

Dm  $\times \times 12 \times$

## Picking Pattern #13

The following single-note tremolo (Ex. 13.1) was used by Django in his unaccompanied guitar piece *Improvisation #1*. The tremolo is followed by an arabesque harmonic minor motif and ends with a descending chromatic run.



### Example 13.1 (Single Note Tremolo)

CD Track #41

The following single-note tremolo (Ex. 13.2) is combined with left-hand vibrato to imitate the sound of a Gypsy violin. This technique is often used by Boulou Ferré in pieces such as *Mitcho Pelo*.

*“It doesn't happen overnight. I really had to practice and practice to be able to play this way.”*

*—Fapy Lafertin*



## Picking Pattern #14

The following two-string tremolo (Ex. 14.1) uses a minor second dissonance (G and F#) to create a striking effect. Django used it in his improvisations on tunes such as *Minor Blues* (1947) and *Douce Ambiance* (1943).



### Example 14.1 (Minor Second Tremolo)

CD Track #43

First system of musical notation for Example 14.1. The staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The notation consists of a series of eighth notes, each marked with a pick (P) and a vibrato (V) symbol. The notes are G4 and F#4, creating a minor second dissonance. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the positions for these notes: 15th fret on the D string (G) and 19th fret on the D string (F#).

Second system of musical notation for Example 14.1. The staff continues the sequence of eighth notes with pick (P) and vibrato (V) symbols. The final measure shows a whole note G4 (15th fret, D string) followed by a whole rest. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the positions for these notes: 15th fret on the D string (G) and 19th fret on the D string (F#).

In the following example (Ex.14.2) a tremolo is applied to open string unisons. Unisons are created by playing the same note on both an open and fretted string simultaneously. It can be used in many harmonic situations such as a G7, G Maj, C Maj7, and E min.



Jan Limberger.  
Photographer:  
Harry Ter Haak



## Example 14.2 (Unison Tremolo)

CD Track #44

Tablature for Example 14.2 (Unison Tremolo):

System 1:

Measure	T	A	B
1	0	5	5
2	0	5	5
3	0	5	5
4	0	5	5

System 2:

Measure	T	A	B
5	0	4	4
6	0	4	4
7	0	4	4
8	0	4	4

## Picking Pattern #15

The next example (Ex. 15.1) uses an eighth-note triplet tremolo on a common Gypsy chordal movement (E Major 7 [b9] chord resolving to an A minor 6 chord.) The E Major 7 (b9) is actually functioning as a very dissonant substitution of an E7 chord. It works because it resolves chromatically to the A minor 6.



## Example 15.1 (Triplet Tremolo)

CD Track #45

Chord Diagrams:

EM<sup>7</sup>(b<sub>9</sub>) 9fr

Am<sup>6</sup> 10fr

Tablature for Example 15.1 (Triplet Tremolo):

Measure	T	A	B
1	11	9	9
2	11	9	9
3	11	9	9
4	11	9	9
5	11	9	9

## Minor Blues Etude "Blues 47"

The following etude is a five-chorus long solo over a minor blues progression. It is packed full of Django Reinhardt clichés which use many of the techniques described in this book. Take your time and study this solo carefully, one chorus at a time. Once you can play it comfortably at slow to medium tempos try adapting some of the ideas used in this solo to other songs in minor keys such as *Minor Swing*, *Douce Ambiance*, *Dark Eyes*, and so forth.

On the accompanying CD this example is mixed with the lead guitar to the extreme right and the rhythm guitar to the extreme left. Turn the balance control on your stereo all the way to the left if you want to practice this solo with the rhythm guitar only.

Pay special attention to the following points of interest:

- ♦ m. 20-21. This descending triplet pattern uses pull-offs to achieve more efficient string changes at high speeds. Notice that a pull-off is substituted for a down stroke whenever there is a string change that would normally require one to play down strokes on two consecutive strings. (Beat 3-4 of m. 20 has a pull-off from Bb to A, beat 1 of m. 21 has a pull-off from D to C.) Django used this technique often when playing fast-descending passages.

Measures 20-21 of the etude. The key signature is B-flat major (three flats). Measure 20 is in Gm6 and measure 21 is in Eb7. The notation shows a descending triplet pattern in the treble clef, with fingerings (1, 4, 3, 2) and (1, 4, 2, 1) indicated. The bass clef shows the fretboard positions for the strings T, A, and B, with fret numbers 10, 13, 12, 11, 10, 13, 11, 10, 12, 11, 13, 12, 10, 12, 12, 10, 9, 12, 10, 13, 11, 14.

- ♦ m. 28-29. The pull-off technique is used once again to play a fast-descending triplet passage.

Measures 28-29 of the etude. The key signature is B-flat major (three flats). Measure 28 is in Gm6 and measure 29 is in Cm6. The notation shows a descending triplet pattern in the treble clef, with fingerings (4, 4) and (1, 3, 1) indicated. The bass clef shows the fretboard positions for the strings T, A, and B, with fret numbers 10, 11, 7, 10, 8, 10, 8, 8, 10, 9, 8, 7, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10.





17  $\text{Cm}^6$   $\text{Gm}^6$

T 8 10 8 8 10 8 11 15 10 13 10 13 12 11 10 13 11 10 12 11

A

B

21  $\text{E}^b7$   $\text{D}^7$   $\text{Gm}^6$

T 13 12 10 12 12 10 9 12 10 13 11 14 13 16 15 10 15 15 10 13 11 11 12

A

B

25  $\text{Gm}^6$

T 6 10 6 10 8 8 11 9 10 11 8 7 10 11 7 10 8

A

B 10 7 8 7 8 10 8 10 11 8 7 8 9 7 9 8 9 7 9

29  $\text{Cm}^6$   $\text{Gm}^6$

T 10 8 8 10 8 10 8 11 15 13 12 13 10 12 10 12 10 10 10 10 13 12 11 10 13 11

A

B 10 9 8 7 10 8 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 10 10

33  $E^b7$   $D^7$   $Gm^6$

T 10 12 11 12 11 13 12 10 13 12 10 9 12 10 13 11 14 12 14 12 12 13 10 12 9 10

A

B

37  $Gm^6$

T 15 19 18 15 19 (15 19) 10 10

A

B

41  $Cm^6$   $Gm^6$

T 11 7 10 8 10 8 8 10 8 10 8 11 10 11 10 6 8 7 10 7 8

A

B

45  $E^b7$   $D^7$   $Gm^6$

T 7 10 8 11 8 5 8 7 10 8 7 8 7 8 5 8 5 7 4 5 8 7 8 11 10 13

A

B

Gm<sup>6</sup>

49

TAB

10 10 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 10 11 10 10 13 11 12 11 10 12 12 13 9

Cm<sup>6</sup>Gm<sup>6</sup>

53

TAB

12 10 12 10 9 10 12 13 12 11 15 13 15 13 11 13 15 10 10 10 11 12 13 12 11 10

E<sup>b</sup>7D<sup>7</sup>Gm<sup>6</sup>

57

TAB

13 11 10 12 11 12 11 13 11 12 11 13 12 10 13 12 9 10 12 13 12 10 13 11 12



Reinier Voet

# Afterword

**T**he ultimate objective of any teacher is to teach his or her students to teach themselves. It is my hope this book will do just that by helping you to develop good practice habits, an ergonomic technique, and a mental framework for discovering and incorporating new musical ideas into your playing. In many respects the hardest part of learning to play the guitar is simply "learning how to learn." Once the student discovers an effective process of learning, advancing his or her playing simply becomes a matter of engaging that process without the frustration of ineffective practicing.

As your study of the guitar progresses beyond the confines of this book, it will become increasingly evident that music is much more than a series of "picking patterns." The reduction of music into a system of patterns serves to assist the student in pinpointing and developing the physical motions required to make music. By internalizing this information, the student can express his or her ideas during a performance without struggling technically. However, this approach runs the risk of training the student to make overly "patternistic" music devoid of creativity and melodic beauty. As you go on to study your favorite Django Reinhardt solos, you'll find much of what he did doesn't fall into an easily categorizable "picking pattern." Rather than being an end unto themselves, patterns serve as the building blocks of a larger creative effort.

I sincerely hope that this book will assist you in your own musical journey. The thought of it making a difference for even a handful of people makes it worth all the effort it took to produce. Good luck and keep playing!

*Michael S. Horowitz*

## Suggested Listening

The following selections comprise much of the popular "canon" of Django Reinhardt solos, which young Sinti guitarists learn as part of their musical education. Many young Gypsies can play nearly all of these solos from memory.

It should be noted that Sinti culture has traditionally been passed down orally. Because of this, they have different norms about when it is or isn't appropriate to "copy" another musician's ideas. In general, Gypsies place less emphasis on individualism than non-Gypsies. In practice this means that performing one of Django's solos, or a successful solo by any other musician, is considered completely normal. Whereas non-Gypsies tend to consider "copying" someone else's solo as a sign of musical weakness, many Gypsies see it as a tribute to a great musician.

### **"Blues Claire" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 14* (FA 314)**

*Blues Claire* is one of the few recordings where Django solos for more than five choruses. Django seems to have an inexhaustible flow of ideas during this 11-chorus solo. Take note of Django's blues cliché-free approach to soloing over blues changes.

### **"Django's Tiger" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 7* (FA 313)**

This improvisation based on the chord changes to *Tiger Rag* is a classic Django performance and an important study piece for Sinti guitarists.

### **"Honeysuckle Rose" (1938)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 7* (FA 307)**

Django recorded *Honeysuckle Rose* many times throughout his career. This version uses Django's classic introduction.

### **"Honeysuckle Rose" (1945)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 7* (FA 307)**

Django's playing sounds more modern and fluid in this version recorded seven years later. Notice Django's frequent use of the "dominant triplet" pattern during the bridge.

### **"I'll See You in My Dreams" (1937)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 9* (FA 309)**

This solo is one of Django's most eloquent. He relies more on melodic development than flashy technique to engage the listener.

### **"Improvisation No. 1" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 5* (FA 305)**

*Improvisation No. 1* is the first in a series of unaccompanied guitar pieces Django recorded throughout his career. The "improvisations" characteristically incorporate more ideas from classical, Spanish, and Gypsy music than they do from jazz. Of all the "improvisations," *Improvisation No. 1* is the one most commonly performed by contemporary Sinti musicians. The fiery chromatic runs, tremolos, and arabesque passages evoke an exotic and turbulent mood.

### **"Les Yeux Noirs (Dark Eyes)" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 14* (FA 314)**

This is Django's most famous version of *Dark Eyes*. It is packed with classic Django devices such as "horizontal arpeggios," "diminished sweeps," and "three-note syncopated patterns." It is considered a "test piece" and has been recorded verbatim by numerous Sinti guitarists such as Raphaël Faÿs, Bireli Lagrene, and Stochelo Rosenberg.

**"Nuages" (1950)-*The Indispensable Django Reinhardt* (RCA 66468-2)**

Django recorded *Nuages* so many times it is hard to pin down a definitive version. This version recorded late in his career contains many of his best ideas for improvising on *Nuages*. From the mid-forties on, Django usually started his *Nuages* solos with artificial harmonics and then used a striking three-octave chromatic run on the bridge.

**Minor Blues Recordings**

Django recorded numerous minor blues solos throughout his career. The following five performances are the ones that Sinti guitarists quote most often.

**"Blues en Minuer" (1942)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 11* (FA 311)**

This recording features a rare performance by Django on violin. He switches to guitar after Stéphane Grappelli's piano solo. On the last chorus Django uses a simple open-string idea which is effective and easy to execute.

**"Blues" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 13* (FA 313)**

This version starts with a violin solo by Grappelli and then switches into double time for Django's guitar solo. Transitioning into double time has become a standard performance practice for *Minor Blues*.

**"Minor Blues" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 13* (FA 313)**

In this big band version, Django plays one of his most eloquent minor blues solos.

**"Blues en Minuer" (1947) -*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 15* (FA 315)**

This electric version is also one of Django's best minor blues solos.

**"Minor Blues" (1949)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 16* (FA 316)**

An acoustic version with Stéphane Grappelli.

**Minor Swing Recordings**

*Minor Swing* could easily be described as the "Gypsy jazz anthem." The following three versions are the ones Sinti guitarists use as the basis for their own solos.

**"Minor Swing" (1937)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 6* (FA 306)**

This is the first recording of *Minor Swing*. It contains many of Django's classic ideas for minor-key playing. The chord soloing and the breathtaking chromatic run in the fourth chorus are showstoppers!

**"Minor Swing" (1947)-*Intégrale Django Reinhardt Vol. 14* (FA 314)**

This version uses a lot of dissonance and has a somewhat less coherent solo than the other two. Nevertheless, several of the ideas in this solo are an essential part of the Gypsy jazz vocabulary. The open string idea Django uses at the beginning of the second chorus is commonly quoted by Sinti guitarists.

**"Minor Swing" (1949)-*The Indispensable Django Reinhardt* (RCA 66468-2)**

This faster version is the one Gypsies quote most often. Django's phrases are longer and more harmonically interesting in this version. The octaves and chord soloing in the third chorus very powerful yet easy to execute.

# Notation Legend

## LEFT HAND FINGERING NUMBERS

Numbers 1-4 placed above the staff notation indicate left hand fingerings. "T" is used to indicate use of the left thumb.

## DOWNSTROKE

## UPSTROKE

## SWEPT-STROKE

The "□" symbol below the staff notation indicates a downstroke. The "V" symbol indicates an upstroke and the "S" a swept-stroke.

## HAMMER-ON

## PULL-OFF

## EMBELLISHMENT

These three examples are all slurs which are indicated with the " ^ " marking. Notice that only the first note of each example is picked. The following notes are produced by either a left hand hammer-on or a pull-off. The "Embellishment" example is executed with a combination of a hammer-on and a pull-off.

## BENDS

## SLIDES

## TREMOLO

Pitch bends are indicated with the " ^ " symbol in the staff notation and the " 1/2 " symbol in the tablature. Slides are indicated with the " / " symbol. Eighth note tremolos are indicated with the " ≡ " symbol. For clarity, many of the examples in this book have tremolos fully notated.



## Musical Examples Index

<b>Example #</b>	<b>Example Name</b>	<b>Page #</b>	<b>Track #</b>
Picking Pattern #1	Downstrokes	19	2
Picking Pattern #2	Upstrokes	20	3
Picking Pattern #3	Swept-Strokes	21	4
Picking Pattern #4	Syncopated Pattern	22	5
Picking Pattern #5	Arpeggio Picking	23	6
Picking Pattern #6	Horizontal Arpeggio	24	7
Picking Pattern #7	Odd String Horizontal Arpeggio	25	8
Picking Pattern #8	Triplet Pattern #1	26	9
Picking Pattern #9	Triplet Pattern #2	27	10
Picking Pattern #10	Triplet Pattern #3	28	11
Picking Pattern #11	Double Bass Pattern	29	12
Picking Pattern #12	Double Bass Pattern (Triplets)	30	13
Picking Pattern #13	Single Note Tremolo	31	14
Picking Pattern #14	Two String Tremolo	32	15
Picking Pattern #15	Two String Tremolo (Triplet)	32	16
Example 2.1	Descending Chromatic Run	34	17
Example 2.2	Ascending Chromatic Run	34	18
Example 3.1	Diminished Sweep	35	19
Example 3.2	Chordal Sweep "Pickology"	36	20
Example 4.1	Three Note Syncopation	37	21
Example 4.2	Cymbalom Pattern	38	22
Example 5.1	Chromatic Arpeggio	39	23
Example 5.2	Quintuplet Arpeggio Pattern	40	24
Example 5.3	Minor Arpeggio Pattern	40	25
Example 6.1	A Minor Horizontal Arpeggio	41	26
Example 6.2	G Major Horizontal Arpeggio	42	27
Example 7.1	A Minor Odd String Arpeggio	42	28
Example 7.2	G Major Odd String Arpeggio	43	29
Example 7.3	D Minor Odd String Arpeggio (5th String)	43	30
Example 7.4	D Major Odd String Arpeggio (5th String)	44	31
Example 8.1	False Fingerings	45	32
Example 8.2	Pentatonic Pattern	45	33
Example 9.1	Dominant Triplet	46	34
Example 9.2	Minor Triplet	46	35
Example 10.1	Triplet Line Cliché	47	36
Example 11.1	Diminished Double Bass Pattern	47	37
Example 11.2	Minor Double Bass Pattern	48	38
Example 12.1	Diminished Double Bass Pattern (Triplets)	48	39
Example 12.2	Baroque Double Bass Pattern (Triplets)	49	40
Example 13.1	Single Note Tremolo	50	41
Example 13.2	Single Note Tremolo With Vibrato	51	42
Example 14.1	Minor Second Tremolo	52	43
Example 14.2	Unison Tremolo	53	44
Example 15.1	Triplet Tremolo	53	45
Minor Blues Etude	Blues 47	55	46

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Michael Horowitz  
176p.



Django Reinhardt's notoriety as a single-note soloist in a group context has often eclipsed his brilliant compositions for the unaccompanied solo guitar. *Unaccompanied Django* includes transcriptions in standard notation and tablature of Django's recorded works for unaccompanied guitar. Gypsy-style fingering and picking suggestions are also included. The pieces in this book are not only useful for performance, but also provide an excellent means for studying the technique and style of Django Reinhardt. Transcriptions are in both standard notation and tablature.

## Forthcoming Releases

Check [DjangoBooks.com](http://DjangoBooks.com) for release dates of these forthcoming books.

**Gypsy Rhythm**  
Michael Horowitz  
CD included

An authentic rhythm sound is the most fundamental skill of Gypsy jazz guitar playing. **Gypsy Rhythm** explains, in great detail, the proper right-hand technique, chord voicings, and accent patterns used by Django and contemporary Gypsy rhythm guitarists. Transcriptions are in tablature only.

**Oscar Alemán  
Play-Along  
Songbook Vol.1**  
Greg Ruby  
CD included

The Argentinean guitarists Oscar Alemán was one of the great virtuosos of the swing era. This book includes his unique arrangements of the following swing and Latin songs: *Besame Mucho*, *Caminos Cruzados (Malaguena)*, *Daphné*, *Diga Diga Do*, *Hombre Mio (Man of Mine)*, *Joseph Joseph*, *Russian Lullaby*, *Scartunas*, *Stardust*, *Sweet Georgia Brown*, *Tico Tico No Fuba*, *You Made Me Love You*. Transcriptions are in both standard notation and tablature.

**Pearl Django  
Play-Along  
Songbook Vol.2**  
Greg Ruby  
CD included

Music in standard notation and tablature (with chord charts) for songs on Pearl Django's CD *Swing 48: CB's Waltz*, *Double Scotch*, *Dragonfly*, *Holiday for Guitars*, *La mer*, *I Can't Believe that You're in Love with Me*, *Melodie au crepuscule*, *Palo Verde*, *Samois Swing*, *Sweet Chorus*, *Sweet Sue/Just You*, *Swing 24*, *Swing 48*, and *Freeway*. Several Bonus Tracks included.

**The Gypsy Jazz  
Pattern Book**  
Michael Horowitz  
CD included

Throughout his career, Django Reinhardt developed a vocabulary of musical ideas or "patterns" which he used as the building blocks for his improvisations. *The Gypsy Jazz Pattern Book* includes dozens of Django's best patterns, transcribed in both standard notation and tablature.

**Gypsy Jazz Intros  
and Endings**  
Michael Horowitz  
CD included

*Gypsy Jazz Intros and Endings* includes dozens of the most commonly-used introductions and endings, transcribed directly from the playing of Django Reinhardt and other notable Gypsy guitarists.



# Gypsy Picking

**Michael Horowitz**

A Tutorial For Gypsy  
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Guitar Technique

**Learn the picking technique used by Django Reinhardt, Stochelo Rosenberg, and Bireli Lagrene.**

*"A wonderfully thorough study of the right hand in Gypsy jazz guitar, this book is a fabulous resource - a 'must' for the serious student of Gypsy jazz, whether a beginner or advanced player."*

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*"While many books have taught arrangements and chord progressions of Reinhardt oriented tunes, none have attacked the correct manner in which the style is traditionally played.*

*Gypsy picking is the first such method and is required study by those who take their Jazz Manouche seriously and wish to obtain a correct, legitimate sound. Horowitz's method of teaching, aimed at players of all-levels, exhibits the quality one would expect from a Berklee graduate while his lessons reflect his hands on study with some of Holland's finest young gypsy talent."*

~ Ted Gottsegen, Contributing Editor of Gypsy Jazz for Just Jazz Guitar



**Gypsy Picking** includes an audio CD of Michael Horowitz demonstrating these exercises.

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